

March 18, 2009

The Honorable Sen. Andrew McDonald and Rep. Michael Lawlor

The Judiciary Committee

Room 2500, Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106

Re: Support for HB 6452, An Act Concerning Discrimination

Mr. McDonald, Mr. Lawlor, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to express my steadfast and wholehearted support for HB 6452: An Act Concerning Discrimination. Passing this bill is an important step toward making sure thousands of Connecticut residents are not discriminated against based on their gender identity and/or expression. Moreover, this bill will guarantee that people, especially youth, are protected from harassment and bigotry based on their own unique gender identity and/or expression.

I serve as Co-chair of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network of CT 's (GLSEN CT) Board of Directors. GLSEN CT is one of more than thirty-five chapters nationwide that works for providing safer schools for all K-12 youth, regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity/expression. As a member of GLSEN CT, I frequently talk with high school members of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), and one of the most common occurrences of bullying and harassment stems from gender expression, or how "masculine" and/or "feminine" one appears.

Often, children will target other peers who do not conform to the traditional gender expectations, roles, and behaviors circumscribed by society. Thus, it is important to teach our children that everyone should be respected and accepted regardless of his/her gender identity/expression, and this bill is one step in the right direction toward providing safer and more conducive learning and creative environments for youth and the larger school community.

Moreover, this bill not only protects transgender people but also people from a broad spectrum of sexual orientations from gender discrimination in the workplace, housing services, and other social institutions. In my experiences living as a gay man in Connecticut, most of the fiercest and most hurtful assaults I have received by social institutions have not been on my sexuality but, rather, on my gender expression. The passage of this bill is vital toward ensuring these assaults will be recognized as violations, prevented, and handled in a way that is legally fair and sound.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 6452: An Act Concerning Discrimination.

Sincerely,

Alberto Cifuentes, Jr.

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